October 11, 2009

Welcome New Members!

Jim Greene (jgreeneman@yahoo.com)
Bob Hartje (coinbob@aol.com)
Steven Stanley
Richard Williams (mountaindoctor@verizon.net)

Please direct inquiries about membership to the SGS website's About Us page.

United States Gold Counterfeit Detection Guide
By Bill Fivaz

Whitman's United States Gold Counterfeit Detection Guide is a full-color, 224-page reference for identifying fake gold coins, from dollars to double eagles. >> read more

News You Can Use

Writer's Needed

One of the purposes of the SGS is to "enjoy each member's knowledge." This newsletter is one of the ways this numismatic knowledge is dispersed. *The frequency of the newsletter is driven by the number of submissions for publication*. The editor of the SGS eNewsletter needs new material and welcomes the opportunity to review your original article for publication. Articles should be relevant to the study of the gold coins and related history of the Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans branch mints and private minters Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers. If you do a presentation at a gathering or other venue, consider compiling your notes into an article. Do not worry about the grammar. The editor will do the rest. Electronic manuscripts should be submitted by email to dcnumisma@charter.net.

Feature

The Southern Gold Coins of 1861

By Robert Kanterman

For the citizens of the United States, and as well for the collector of Southern Gold, 1861 was a pivotal year in our history. Of course, this was the year in which the decades of tension between the northern states and the southern states finally devolved into what is now known as the Civil War. For the southern gold coin collector, this year has particularly great significance as the three operating southern branch mints (Charlotte, Dahlonega, and New Orleans) all ceased production in 1861, but not before each issued a denomination (or two, in the case of Dahlonega), under the auspices of their new governing bodies (either State or Confederacy). There are a total of four southern branch mint gold coins from 1861, and we will discuss them all here.

1861-D Gold Dollar

The 1861-D gold dollar is the only dollar denomination southern gold coin of 1861, and the only issue whose entire mintage is believed to have been struck by the Confederacy. No 1861-D dollars were struck by the Mint while under United States control, but approximately 1000-1500 pieces are estimated to have been struck while the Mint was under Confederate control, after being seized by rebel forces in April, 1861. The 1861-D gold dollar has ever been a popular issue among numismatists. If one researches auction catalogs from the first half of the twentieth century, these were even then considered to be notable pieces, found in better collections, and sold

for premium prices over coins that are considered to be more significant rarities today.

Regrettably, for the Dahlonega collector, 1861-D dollars have appeared infrequently at auction and retail offerings over the past several years, with the majority of those available have had significant “problems”. Interestingly, when acceptable pieces do come to market they tend to be higher in grade (AU or better). The two finest known pieces are currently impounded in the Alabama Collection, both coins having illustrious pedigrees from the finest cabinets of the last century.

1861-C Half Eagle
The 1861-C is the most common of the southern gold issues of 1861, and it is the coin that when found is probably the least likely to have been struck by the Confederacy. 5992 pieces were struck by the US Mint, with another 887 issued in May, 1861, one month after Confederate forces took over operation of the Charlotte branch mint. In 1997, Winter estimated that there were 95-105 survivors, but I suspect that when his Gold Coins of the Charlotte Mint is reissued, this estimate will be revised upward, to perhaps as high as 125 or more pieces. These are seen with some regularity in larger US coins auctions and not infrequently in dealer inventories. They are also, for the grade, the least expensive of the southern gold coins of 1861, and have always been less expensive and more available than the sister issue from the Dahlonega Mint.

1861-D Half Eagle
The 1861-D half eagle is the second of two issues of 1861 that was produced in Dahlonega in the final year of operation of the Dahlonega Mint. 1597 coins were struck while the Mint was under U.S. control and another one to two thousand struck after the Confederacy told charge in April, 1861. It is a popular and challenging issue for collectors of Dahlonega gold, and many consider it to be the key date of the Dahlonega half eagle date set, with around 65-75 pieces known. The 1861-D half eagle has appeared only occasionally at auction over the past few years, and the nicer pieces have sold for prices well over published price guide values. Despite the small number of coins, those that do survive are proportionally better preserved than many other dates in the Dahlonega half eagle series.

1861-O Double Eagle
The 1861-O double eagle is the only larger denomination 1861 southern gold coin and the only one struck at the New Orleans Mint. 5000 were struck by the Union, 9,750 by the State of Louisiana, and 2,991 by the Confederacy for a total mintage of 17,741 pieces. Most examples that are found have the strike characteristic of a weak lower half of the date, while a minority show a strong date, leading some to speculate that either the weak lower digits or strong are more likely to be struck by non-Union coiners. There is no proof or consensus of this point among collectors. There is also a fascinating theory, offered by Tom Hoke (The Numismatist, September, 1994), that as many as 5,000 pieces were stolen and hidden by Mint Superintendent and Confederate sympathizer (and later Confederate Army Captain) Johnson Kelly Duncan. Such a hoard is rumored, but has never been discovered, and based on the evidence available, it is unlikely to exist.

The 1861-O $20 is a coin that is in great demand from both collectors of New Orleans gold and the $20 Liberty gold series, such that the estimated 150 or so surviving pieces are highly sought. The coins do appear fairly regularly at auction, more often than the 1861-D $5’s, and have recently sold for prices beyond what is published.

Summary
1861 was an extremely interesting year historically and remains of numismatic importance for the southern gold collector. If a collector would like a single southern gold coin from this year, the 1861-C half eagle is the easiest and least expensive choice. Assembling the complete four-coin set of southern gold coins of 1861 is surprisingly challenging and has become rather expensive, as well. As a collector, I would recommend this as an interesting side project for one who is interested in southern gold, rather than the main focus, as acquiring acceptable coins in nearly any

price point will require much time and patience, and acquisitions will likely be spaced over a long period of time.

Mission Statement

The Southern Gold Society was formed to increase the enjoyment and study of Southern gold coins and related history, through an informal, relaxed mix of education and fellowship. The society is reminiscent of those of a bygone era, in which connoisseurship and a gentlemanly appreciation of Southern gold coins is the order of the day.

Purpose

- To facilitate the enjoyment and study of the gold coins and related history of the Southern branch mints (Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans) and private Southern minters (Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers).
- To enjoy each member's knowledge and friendship in an informal manner.
- To provide a relaxed, pleasant environment in which to meet during selected coin shows and other convenient events.
- To encourage the appreciation and preservation of a Southern gold coin's original surfaces.
- To consolidate the information, resources, and talent available to enthusiasts of these historic Southern gold coins.

Annual Membership Fees

Regular $25 (January-December).

Membership for new members joining in October, November, or December extends through the next year. Checks for membership fees should be made payable to the Southern Gold Society and mailed to **David Crenshaw, P.O. Box 237, Dacula, GA 30019-0004**.

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